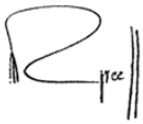
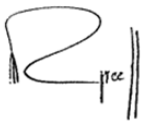
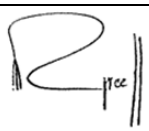
NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

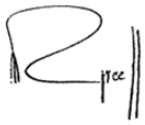
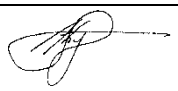
Faculty of Health Sciences

ETHICS OFFICE	Standard Operating Procedure		
Title	SOP for the research ethics approval application process		
SOP no	SOP_Ethics_1.4	**Version no**	1
Date of approval	9 November 2016	**Revision date**	November 2019
Web address	http://health-sciences.nwu.ac.za/healthethics	**Page no**	Page 1 to 23

1 COMPILATION AND AUTHORISATION

Action	Designated person	Signature	Date
Compiled by:	Prof Minrie Greeff		25 Aug 2016
Checked by:	HREC		8 Sept 2016
	AnimCare		8 Sept 2016
	Ethics Office		8 Sept 2016
	Faculty Board		9 Nov 2016
Authorised by:	Prof Minrie Greeff as Head of the Ethics Office		9 Nov 2016

2 DISTRIBUTION

Department/Unit	Name	Signature	Date
Ethics Office	Prof Minrie Greeff		10 Nov 2016
Chairperson on behalf of HREC	Dr GW Towers		10 Nov 2016
Chairperson on behalf of AnimCare	Prof Tiaan Brink		10 Nov 2016
Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences	Prof Awie Kotzé		10 Nov 2016
Faculty of Health Sciences	Ms Leanie van Ronge		10 Nov 2016

3 DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Version No.	Reason for revision
9 Nov 2016	1	Procedure formulated as a SOP

4 PURPOSE OF THE SOP

The purpose of this SOP is to provide researchers with a clear systematic procedure to follow when applying for one of the five options for ethics approval:

4.1 A first-time application for a *single study* or a *larger study* (See 6 for definitions)

4.2 A *sub-study application* (master's or doctoral student) under an approved *larger* study

4.3 A systematic review

4.4 An application for an *amendment* to an approved study

4.5 *Monitoring report* or a request for an *extension* of an approved study

5 SCOPE

This SOP is intended for all researchers and postgraduate students of the NWU who plan to conduct studies that use human participants or animals or that could impact on the environment. It covers the full application process to obtain research ethics approval before research is conducted, permission for amendments and the monitoring process during research.

6 ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR DEFINITIONS

Abbreviation/definition	Description
HREC	Health Research Ethics Committee
AnimCare	The Ethics Committee on Animal Care, Health and Safety in Research
NWU	North-West University
Single study	A study consisting of one or more researchers not intending to involve master's or doctoral students, or for the purpose of a single master's or doctoral study. or A single study could also be *affiliated* with *another study* not approved as a larger study by using the other study's previously collected data or biological samples but using a specific methodology for obtaining results. The methodology is not specified in the original *other study*. The project leader of the other study must give permission for the use of the data or biological samples and specify its use. The study could either: 1) fulfil one of the previously stated objectives not yet achieved, or 2) work on secondary data analysis. or A study intending to run over several years, collecting data and biological samples to be used with the described methodology focusing more on data collection e.g. PURE, AficaPREDICT. Follow-up studies will use various methodologies to obtain results from the originally collected database or biological samples.
Larger study	A study planning to involve several master's and doctoral students and that clearly identifies the objectives per student as well as the methodology to be used by each potential students. The extent of the data or biological samples is more extensive in nature and can accommodate several students. The objective(s) should indicate whether it is for a master's or a doctoral student. The inclusion of this type of study is to simplify the research ethics application process for future master's and doctoral students that will be working in this study.
Sub-study	A sub-study that has been identified as a potential master's or doctoral study in the objectives of an ethically approved larger study by covering a *specific stated objective(s)* of the larger study, using *identical methodology* or section(s) of the methodology as the larger study. It could be that data and/or biological samples have already been collected or are going to be collected. NB The sub-study can add **no new methodology** that was not covered in the larger study. If the latter is needed, the larger study should be amended first.
Systematic review	A systematic review is a study wherein the entire scope of available publications or published works regarding a specific topic is methodically and critically analysed. Generally, a systematic review is done according to very specific guidelines, such as those defined by the Cochrane Collaboration or as indicated in the PRISMA statement. Systematic reviews can be done on their own or may also include a meta-analysis of the published results to provide a summary decision regarding the evidence for or against a specific topic.
Rapid review	A rapid review is a type of systematic review that is generally undertaken to inform decision makers of a specific emergent or urgent topic. As the reason for doing a rapid review is to provide evidence in situations where time is of the essence, certain procedures of the

	usual systematic review process are simplified or removed in order to reduce the turnaround time of the review.
Narrative literature review	A narrative review summarises the key findings of a specific topic and may follow a less structured analysis of all published outputs available than in the case of a systematic review. The summation of the data is generally more qualitative than quantitative in nature.
Amendment	Any change made to the originally planned proposal and that happens while the study is being conducted. No change may be implemented without first obtaining the necessary approval of the HREC or AnimCare.
Monitoring	Monitoring refers to the process of observing quality and conduct of the research while in progress. *Passive monitoring* refers to the compulsory reporting required by HREC or AnimCare (minimum on an annual basis). *Active monitoring* refers to unannounced monitoring visits conducted by HREC or AnimCare to research sites or where data is stored. A study is approved on a year-by-year basis, based on the submission and positive outcome of the review of the annual monitoring report and written confirmation that the study may continue for another year.
Extension	However, if a researcher requires extension for a study not falling in the mentioned monitoring time frame, extension can be requested by submitting a monitoring report to HREC or AnimCare.

7 RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility lies with the researcher (employee of the University) or supervisor to ensure that research ethics approval is obtained in time before a study is started and that the study is conducted according to the approved proposal. The supervisor remains the primary accountable person for the way in which the study obtained ethics approval and is conducted. The HREC, AnimCare and the Ethics Office administrators communicate with the researcher or supervisor and not the student. The latter is the responsibility of the supervisor.

8 PROCEDURE(S)

8.1 A first-time application for a single study (including an affiliated study to another study with previously collected data or biological samples) or a larger study with defined postgraduate student projects

Process:

Conceptualise the research study (observing problems, reading literature, discussion, etc.)

Develop the research proposal and applicable accompanying documentation and enter into negotiations with potential authorities to ensure that they will be open for the research to be conducted.

Download the necessary documents from the Ethics Office's website http://health-sciences.nwu.ac.za/healthethics

Submit the proposal to the *scientific/proposal committee* in your research entity for scientific evaluation and approval.

Obtain a letter of approval from them, which has to be attached to the application.

Once the proposal has been approved by the scientific/proposal committee, submit the title registration request through the Faculty office (this is a process that runs parallel to the research ethics application process).

Submit the completed ethics application either to the:

- AnimCare administration, for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- HREC administration, for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

Attach all the required documents *separately* to the e-mail (see attachment checklist below).

Attach a *covering letter* indicating:

- the title of the research;
- the researcher(s);
- the type of research ethics application ;
- which documents are attached to the application; and
- add any explanation you wish the REC to take note of in your application.

Application sent by administration (three working days) to two to three independent reviewers (5 working days for review).

The application is discussed at the appropriate REC, e.g. research involving animals at the AnimCare committee meeting and research involving humans at the HREC meeting.

- Decision process
  - Aggregate individual views
  - Deliberation (debate)
  - Analogue (consensus)
  - Vote, if necessary
- Decision
  - Approved
  - Approved with minimal/several changes
  - Deferred (too many changes and further committee deliberation needed)
  - Disapproved (have to go back to the drawing board)

Formal letter of decision of the REC with attached independent reviewer reports are sent to the applicant (always the supervisor or PI) as soon as possible (approximately three working days) after the meeting by the appropriate administrator.

Corrections are done by the applicant and are sent back as soon as possible to either:

- the AnimCare administrator for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or

- the HREC administrator for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for HREC now changes to Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za if corrections are needed).

A rebuttal letter should be included indicating *what, how* and *where* in the documentation the corrections were addressed. (Corrections should be highlighted in the various documents as well.)

The *total set* of new documentation should be included as this will then be the set used for monitoring purposes as required by the NHREC.

The updated application is re-sent to the same independent reviewers for the review of the corrections (three working days).

Corrections are either approved by reviewers or further corrections are requested.

If additional corrections are requested they should be corrected (as previously indicated) and re-submitted by the applicant to either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for the HREC remains Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za during this reviewing process).

If approved, a letter of approval is sent to the researcher(s) by either:

- the AnimCare administrator for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nuw.ac.za) or
- the HREC administrator for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za).

The letter will either indicate *final approval* or *conditional approval.* (Conditional approval is given when there are certain processes that have to occur before final approval can be given. E.g. approval of a study from the Department of Health (DoH) can only be applied for after the HREC gives approval; however, the HREC cannot approve the study without receiving the permission letter from the DoH; therefore, *conditional approval* is granted; or where interview schedules will be developed as the study unfolds. These conditions will be clearly stated.)

Once the English version of the informed consent form has been finally approved, the applicants can have the form translated into the culturally relevant languages. This is to ensure that the applicants only have to translate the informed consent documentation once it has been approved.

If a project has been conditionally approved, any other outstanding documents, e.g. permission letters from authorities (e.g. Department of Health) that could only be obtained after ethics approval was obtained, must be sent to the appropriate administration in the Ethics Office as soon as possible (if applicable).

If the *conditions associated with the approval are process-linked,* e.g. development of an interview schedule for phase two of a project is based on the results obtained during phase one of the project, then the research can continue until that point, e.g. the end of phase one, after which the applicant must submit the required documentation for approval before the study can continue.

This documentation must be submitted to:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or

- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za).

For research involving humans, the approved informed consent documentation as well as the translated versions of the informed consent documents must be brought to be *stamped* by the Ethics Office before they are photocopied and used in the research (Contact Ms Leanie van Ronge x 018 299 2197 for an appointment).

Research can begin as soon as the researcher has received the ethics approval letter.

The ethics certificate is only issued by the Institutional Office once all conditions are met.

If needed, send any future amendments of the proposal or the rest of the documentation to the appropriate administration:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

(See Section 3 (amendments) for the process)

For ***minimal risk studies*** *involving humans*, an ***annual monitoring report*** must be submitted for the duration of the study *at least two months before expiry* and annually until it has been completed. For ***medium or high-risk studies***, **a monitoring report must be submitted *six monthly*** for the duration of the study. Ensure that the monitoring report submitted for the end of the annual term is submitted *at least two months before expiry* of the ethics approval of the project (see Section 4 (monitoring reports) for the process). For studies involving animals, *Category 0 to 4 studies* require an ***annual monitoring report*** to be submitted for the duration of the study, which should be submitted *at least two months before expiry* of the ethics approval of the project. For *Category 5 studies,* **a monitoring report must be submitted *six monthly*** for the duration of the study. Ensure that the monitoring report submitted for the end of the annual term is submitted *at least two months before expiry of the ethics approval of the project.*

Note: Only one-year ethics approval of projects may be granted due to legal requirements.

It must be indicated in the monitoring report whether the study is *completed or not*. If the study is completed, the monitoring report acts as a *final report*. If the study is not complete, the monitoring report acts as a request to *extend the study*.

NB If a study is terminated, immediately notify the appropriate administration.

Research dissemination/publication.

Checklist for attachments for a single study research ethics approval applications to the HREC:

	Document	Tick if attached	Comment
1	Cover letter that indicates the title, researcher(s), the type of research ethics application, which documents are attached, and that adds any explanations to clarify your application		

2	Executive summary of the project (150 words only)		
3	Proposal approved by a scientific/proposal committee		
4	An ethics application form to provide additional information not covered in the proposal (see two forms: one for researchers in the Faculty of Health Sciences and one for researchers doing health-related research, but not in the Faculty of Health Sciences)		
5	Informed consent documentation and checklist (if collaborative study, informed consent from all the centres OR if an affiliated study, the original informed consent documentation of the original study)		
6	Advertisements or recruitment materials		
7	Questionnaire(s); interview schedule for interviews or focus groups		
8	Approval letter of the study by the scientific committee		
9	2-page narrative CVs of all the researchers in the project		
10	Proof of ethics training over the past three years for all the researchers in the project		
11	Permission letters from governing bodies to conduct the research		
12	Goodwill permission letters		
13	Any other applicable documentation, e.g. MOU, contracts with collaborators/laboratories, permits, etc.		
14	Signed NWU code of conduct for researchers for each team member		
15	Signed statistical consultation form		
16	**Submitted as hard or scanned copies:** Printed and signed pages of the ethics application form for the declarations by the project leader, statistical consultation services, director of the research entity		
17	Checklist of attachments		
	If applicable:		
18	Confidentiality agreement		
19	Indemnity form		
20	Permission from the project leader if a study is done as an affiliated study under another study or a sub-study under a larger study		
21	Form A for delegated ministerial consent in the case of greater than minimal risk research in children with no prospect of direct benefit to them		
22	Permission letter of the chairs of the HREC and HHREC if the study is an affiliated study or sub-study under a larger study on another campus than where the student is registered		
23	If any non-registered medication is used, approval letter by the Medical Control Council		
24	If radio-active substances are used, letter from the radiation control officer		

Attachments for applications to AnimCare:

	Document	Tick if attached	Comment
1	Cover letter that indicates the title, researcher(s), the type of research ethics application, which documents are attached, and that adds any explanations to clarify your application		
2	An ethics application form to provide additional information not covered in the proposal		
3	Project proposal as approved by the Scientific Committee		
4	Scientific Committee's signed letter of approval of the project		
5	Monitoring sheets to observe any undue pain and suffering, and to manage (alleviate) pain and suffering when humane endpoints are reached		
6	Narrative CVs for each member of the project team *(project head, supervisor, researchers, students, co-workers, assistants, etc.)* and professional supervisors		
7	Copy of the signed NWU Code of Conduct for Researchers for each researcher in the project team *(project head, researchers, students)*		
8	Proof of ethics training *(minimum SANS training during the last 3 years)*		
9	Vivarium authorisation (following animal handling course and SAVC authorisation)		
10	Proof of SAVC authorisation *(included in Vivarium authorisation)*		
11	Proof of training in animal handling *(included in Vivarium authorisation)*		
12	Animal holding facility's certificate of SAVC registration		
13	Other permission letters, informed consent, permits and contracts as received from relevant governing bodies, collaborators, sponsors or owners		
14	Submitted as scanned copies: Printed and signed pages of the ethics application form for the declarations by the project head, statistical consultation services, directors of the school and the research entity, e-mailed as scanned copies		
15	Checklist of attachments		
16	If applicable permission from the project leader if a study is done as an affiliated study under another study or a sub-study under a larger study		

8.2 A research ethics approval application for a sub-study under an approved larger study

Process:

Conceptualise the sub-study and how it will fall within the approved larger study (observing the specific problems, reading focused literature, discussion, etc.).

Enter into negotiations with the project leader of the larger study, to ensure that he/she will be open for the sub-study to be conducted under the larger study.

Develop the research proposal for the sub-study and get the applicable accompanying documentation ready.

Submit the proposal to the *scientific/proposal committee* in your entity for scientific evaluation and approval.

Obtain a letter of approval from them, which has to be attached to the application.

Once the proposal has been approved by the scientific/proposal committee submit the title registration request through the Faculty office (this is a process that runs parallel to the research ethics application process).

Download the necessary documents from the Ethics Office's website http://health-sciences.nwu.ac.za/healthethics

Submit the new sub-study proposal and the additional required documentation either to:

- AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za).

Attach all the required documents *separately* to the e-mail (see attached checklist below)

Attach a covering letter indicating:

- the title of the research
- the researcher(s)
- the type of research ethics application
- which documents are attached to the application, and
- add any explanation you wish the REC to take note of in your application

Application sent by administration (three working days) to two to three independent reviewers (5 working days for review).

The application is discussed at the appropriate REC meeting, e.g. research involving animals at the AnimCare committee meeting and research involving humans at the HREC meeting

- Decision process
  - Aggregate individual views
  - Deliberation (debate)
  - Analogue (consensus)
  - Vote, if necessary
- Decision
  - Approved
  - Approved with minimal/several changes

- Deferred (too many changes and further committee deliberation needed)
- Disapproved (have to go back to the drawing board)

Formal letter of decision of the REC with attached independent reviewer reports are sent to the applicant (always the supervisor or PI) as soon as possible (approximately three working days) after the meeting by the appropriate administrator.

Corrections are done by the applicant and are sent back as soon as possible to either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for HREC now changes to Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za if corrections are needed).

A rebuttal letter should be included indicating *what, how* and *where* in the documentation the corrections were addressed. (Corrections should be highlighted in the various documents as well.)

The *total set* of new documentation should be included as this will then be the set used for monitoring purposes as required by the NHREC.

The updated applications are re-sent to the same independent reviewers for the review of the corrections (three working days).

Corrections are either approved by reviewers or further corrections are requested.

If additional corrections are requested they should be corrected (as previously indicated) and re-submitted by the applicant to either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administation for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for the HREC remains Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za during this reviewing process).

If approved, a letter of approval is sent to the researcher(s) by either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

The letter will either indicate *final approval* or *conditional approval.* (Conditional approval is given when there are certain processes that have to occur before final approval can be given. E.g. approval of a study from the Department of Health (DoH) can only be applied for after the HREC gives approval; however, the HREC cannot approve the study without receiving the permission letter from the DoH, therefore *conditional approval* is granted. These conditions are clearly stated.)

Once the English version of the informed consent form has been finally approved, the applicants can have the form translated into the culturally relevant languages. This is to ensure that the applicants only have to translate the informed consent documentation once it has been approved.

If a project has been conditionally approved, send any other outstanding documents, e.g. permission letters from authorities (e.g. Department of Health) that could only be obtained after ethics approval was obtained, to the appropriate administration in the Ethics Office as soon as possible (if applicable).

If the *conditions associated with the approval are process-linked,* e.g. development of an interview schedule for phase two of a project is based on the results obtained during phase one of the project, then the research can continue until that point, e.g. the end of phase one, after which the applicant must submit the required documentation for approval before the study can continue.

This documentation must be submitted to:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za).

For research involving humans, the approved informed consent documentation as well as the translated versions of the informed consent documents must be brought to be *stamped* by the Ethics Office before they are photocopied and used in the research (contact Ms Leanie van Ronge x 018 299 2197 for an appointment).

Research can begin as soon as the researcher has received the ethics approval letter.

The ethics certificate is only issued by the Institutional Office once all conditions are met.

If needed, send any future amendments of the proposal or the rest of the documentation to the appropriate administration:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

(See Section 3 (amendments) for the process)

For ***minimal risk studies involving humans***, an ***annual monitoring report*** must be submitted for the duration of the study *at least two months before expiry* and annually until it has been completed. For ***medium or high-risk studies***, ***a monitoring report must be submitted six monthly*** for the duration of the study. Ensure that the monitoring report submitted for the end of the annual term is submitted *at least two months before expiry of the ethics approval of the project* (see Section 4 (monitoring reports) for the process). For studies involving animals, *Category 0 to 4 studies require* an ***annual monitoring report*** to be submitted for the duration of the study, which should be submitted *at least two months before expiry of the ethics approval of the project*. For *Category 5 studies,* **a monitoring report must be submitted *six monthly*** for the duration of the study. Ensure that the monitoring report submitted for the end of the annual term is submitted *at least two months before expiry of the ethics approval of the project.*

Note: Only one-year ethics approval of projects may be granted due to legal requirements.

It must be indicated in the monitoring report whether the study is *completed or not*. If the study is completed, the monitoring report acts as a *final report*. If the study is not complete, the monitoring report acts as a request to *extend the study*.

NB If a study is terminated immediately notify the appropriate administration.

Research dissemination/publication.

Checklist for attachments for a sub-study under a larger study research ethics approval applications to the HREC:

	Document	Tick if attached	Comment
1	Have the data/biological samples already been gathered, or are these in a process of longitudinal gathering, or part of an intervention?	If *yes*: If *no*:	Continue Make sure the larger study truly qualifies as a larger study by completing the attached evaluation form.
2	Is the study clearly stated as an objective in the larger study?	If *yes*: If *no*:	Continue Make sure the larger study truly qualifies as a larger study by completing the attached evaluation form.
3	Cover letter that indicates: • Title of the larger study • Title of the sub-study • Student information • Supervisor(s) • What the sub-study is about and how it fits into the larger study; the objective(s) it intends to fulfil from the original study • What documents are attached • Detailed description of any outstanding issues of the larger study identified during the evaluation of the larger project (see evaluation form below) done by the project leader and how it will be addressed. *(Note: This should be handled as a separate amendment to the larger study if it involves changes that will still take place in future and should be done before the sub-study is submitted for ethics approval.)*		
4	Executive summary of the sub-study (150 words only)		
5	Original proposal of the larger study		
6	Original informed consent documentation of the larger study		
7	Copy of the ethics approval certificate of the larger study		
8	Letter from the project leader clearly indicating *which objective(s) will be covered* as a sub-study under the larger project, as well as clearly specifying *what part of the previously collected*		

	data/biological samples can be used and *for what*		
9	Approval letter of the sub-study by the scientific/proposal committee		
10	New proposal of the sub-study		
11	2-page narrative CVs of all the researchers in the sub-study		
12	Proof of ethics training over the past three years for all the researchers involved in the sub-study		
13	Signed NWU code of conduct for researchers for each team member		
14	Signed statistical consultation form		
15	**Submitted as hard or scanned copies:** Printed and signed pages of the ethics application form for the declarations by the project leader, statistical consultation services, director of the research entity		
16	Checklist of attachments		
	If applicable:		
17	Confidentiality agreement		
18	Indemnity form		
19	Form A for delegated ministerial consent in the case of greater than minimal risk research in children with no prospect of direct benefit to them		
21	Permission letter of the chairs of the HREC and HHREC if the study is an affiliated study or sub-study under a larger study on another campus than where the student is registered		
22	Evaluation form to see if the larger study qualifies as a larger study, completed by the project leader		

Checklist for attachments for a sub-study research ethics approval application to AnimCare:

	Document	Tick if attached	Comment
1	Cover letter that indicates: • Title of the larger study • Title of the sub-study • Student information • Supervisor(s) • What the sub-study is about and how it fits into the larger study • What documents are attached Detailed description of any outstanding issues of the larger study identified during the evaluation of the larger project (see evaluation form below) done by the project leader and how it will be addressed *(Note: This should be handled as a separate amendment to the larger study if it involves changes that will still take place in future and should be done before the sub-study is submitted for ethics approval)*.		
2	Larger project proposal as approved by the Scientific Committee		
3	Sub-study proposal as approved by the Scientific Committee		

4	Copy of the ethics approval certificate of the larger project		
5	Project head's permission letter that the sub-study may fall under the large project		
6	Scientific Committee's signed letter of approval of the sub-study		
7	2-page narrative CVs of all the researchers in the sub-study		
8	New monitoring sheets *(only if not included in the approved large project application)* to observe any undue pain and suffering, and to manage (alleviate) pain and suffering when humane endpoints are reached		
9	Copy of the signed NWU Code of Conduct for Researchers of new members only		
10	Proof of ethics training of new members only (minimum SANS training during the last 3 years)		
11	Vivarium authorisation of new members only (following animal handling course and SAVC authorisation)		
12	Proof of SAVC authorisation of new members only (included in Vivarium authorisation)		
13	Proof of training in animal handling of new members only (included in Vivarium authorisation)		
14	Other new permission letters, informed consent, permits and contracts as received from relevant governing bodies, collaborators, sponsors or owners		
15	If any non-registered medication is used, approval letter by the Medical Control Council		
16	Submitted as scanned copies: Printed and signed pages of the ethics application form for the declarations by the project head, statistical consultation services, directors of the research entity, scanned and e-mailed		

8.3 Systematic review

In the case of a systematic review it may or may not have ethical implications when the study involves research with humans, e.g. deciding on an intervention or leading to guidelines. When a minimal risk (or higher) exists, ethics approval is required. In some cases, the journal expects an ethics approval number. To obtain such a number, the research proposal needs to be evaluated by HREC.

Process:

Conceptualise the research study (observing problems, reading literature, discussion, etc.).

Develop the research proposal and applicable accompanying documentation.

Download the necessary documents from the Ethics Office's website http://health-sciences.nwu.ac.za/healthethics

Submit the proposal to the *scientific/proposal committee* in your research entity for scientific evaluation and approval.

Obtain a letter of approval from them, which has to be attached to the application.

Once the proposal has been approved by the scientific/proposal committee, submit the title registration request through the Faculty office (this is a process that runs parallel to the research ethics application process).

Submit the completed ethics application to the:

- HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

Attach all the required documents *separately* to the e-mail (see attachment checklist below).

Attach a *covering letter* indicating:

- the title of the research
- the researcher(s)
- the type of research ethics application
- which documents are attached to the application, and
- add any explanation to clarify your application

Application sent by administration (three working days) to two to three independent reviewers (5 working days for review).

The application is discussed at HREC

- Decision process
  - Aggregate individual views
  - Deliberation (debate)
  - Analogue (consensus)
  - Vote, if necessary
- Decision
  - Approved
  - Approved with minimal/several changes
  - Deferred (too many changes and further committee deliberation needed)
  - Disapproved (have to go back to the drawing board)

Formal letter of decision of the REC with attached independent reviewer reports are sent to the applicant (always the supervisor or PI) as soon as possible (approximately three working days) after the meeting by the appropriate administrator.

Corrections are done by the applicant and are sent back as soon as possible to:

- the HREC administrator for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for HREC now changes to Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za if corrections are needed).

A rebuttal letter should be included indicating *what, how* and *where* in the documentation the corrections were addressed. (Corrections should be highlighted in the various documents as well.)

The *total set* of new documentation should be included as this will then be the set used for monitoring purposes as required by the NHREC.

The updated application is re-sent to the same independent reviewers for the review of the corrections (three working days).

Corrections are either approved by reviewers or further corrections are requested.

If additional corrections are requested they should be corrected (as previously indicated) and re-submitted by the applicant to:

- the HREC administration for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for the HREC remains Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za during this reviewing process).

If approved, a letter of approval is sent to the researcher(s) by:

- the HREC administrator for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za).

The letter will either indicate *final approval* or *conditional approval.* (Conditional approval is given when there are certain processes that have to occur before final approval can be given. These conditions will be clearly stated.).

If a project has been conditionally approved, send any other outstanding documents to the administration in the Ethics Office as soon as possible (if applicable).

This documentation must be submitted to:

- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za).

Research can begin as soon as the researcher has received the ethics approval letter.

The ethics certificate is only issued by the Institutional Office once all conditions are met.

If needed, send any future amendments of the proposal or the rest of the documentation to the appropriate administration:

- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

(See Section 3 (amendments) for the process)

For ***minimal risk studies*** *involving humans*, an ***annual monitoring report*** must be submitted for the duration of the study *at least two months before expiry* and annually until it has been completed. For ***medium or high-risk studies***, **a monitoring report must be submitted *six monthly*** for the duration

of the study. Ensure that the monitoring report submitted for the end of the annual term is submitted *at least two months before expiry* of the ethics approval of the project (see Section 4 (monitoring reports) for the process).

Note: Only one-year ethics approval of projects may be granted due to legal requirements.

It must be indicated in the monitoring report whether the study is *completed or not*. If the study is completed, the monitoring report acts as a *final report*. If the study is not complete, the monitoring report acts as a request to *extend the study*.

NB If a study is terminated, immediately notify the appropriate administration.

Research dissemination/publication.

Checklist for attachments for a systematic review research ethics approval applications to the HREC:

	Document	Tick if attached	Comment
1	Cover letter that indicates the title, researcher(s), the type of research ethics application, which documents are attached, and that adds any explanations to clarify your application		
2	Executive summary of the project (150 words only)		
3	Proposal approved by a scientific/proposal committee		
4	A systematic review ethics application form to provide additional information not covered in the proposal		
5	Approval letter of the study by the scientific committee		
6	2-page narrative CVs of all the researchers in the project		
7	Proof of ethics training over the past three years for all the researchers in the project		
8	Signed NWU code of conduct for researchers for each team member		
9	**Submitted as hard or scanned copies:** Printed and signed pages of the ethics application form for the declarations by the project leader, statistical consultation services, director of the research entity		
10	Checklist of attachments		

8.4 Application for an amendment to an approved study

Process:

Decide what the required amendments are for the present study (*It may be that amendments require speedy approval*).

Review and update the proposal and any other study documentation and indicate clearly where the possible changes have been made in order to amend the existing study (using yellow highlight).

Formulate a clear and systematic cover letter guiding the appropriate ethics committee, e.g. AnimCare for research involving animals or HREC for research involving humans, through the amendments that have been made:

- the title of the research
- the researcher(s)
- that it is an amendment request
- the nature of the amendment (indicating what changes have been made and where)
- which documents are attached to the application, and
- add any explanation to clarify your application

Submit the amended ethics application to either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za).

Attach all the required documents separately to the e-mail (see document checklist below).

Application sent by administration (within three days) to two to three independent reviewers (3 working days for review).

The application is handled as expedited (changes not of a large nature) or discussed at the next appropriate Ethics Committee meeting (if large changes are made), e.g. research involving animals at the AnimCare committee meeting and research involving humans at the HREC meeting if of a larger nature.

- Decision process
  - Aggregate individual views
  - Deliberation (debate)
  - Analogue (consensus)
  - Vote, if necessary
- Decision
  - Approved
  - Approved with minimal/several changes
  - Deferred (too many changes and further committee deliberation needed)
  - disapproved (have to go back to the drawing board)

Formal letter of decision of the REC with feedback is sent to the applicant (always the supervisor or PI) as soon as possible (approximately three working days) after the meeting by the appropriate administration, or sooner if expedited.

Corrections are done by the applicant and are sent back to either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for HREC now changes to Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za).

A rebuttal letter should be included indicating *what*, *how* and *where* in the documentation the corrections were addressed (corrections should be highlighted in the various documents as well).

The *total set* of new documentation should be included as this will then be the set used for monitoring purposes as required by the NHREC.

The updated application is re-sent to the same independent reviewers for the review of the corrections (three working days).

Corrections are either approved by reviewers or further corrections are requested.

If additional corrections are requested they should be corrected (as previously indicated) and re-submitted by the applicants to either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (note that the corresponding person for the HREC remains Ethics-HRECProcess@nwu.ac.za during this reviewing process).

If approved, a letter of approval is sent to the researcher(s) by either:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

Research can continue with the amended approach and documentation as soon as the researcher has received the ethics approval letter from the appropriate REC for the amendments.

If needed, send any future amendments of the proposal or the rest of the documentation to the appropriate administration:

- the AnimCare administration for research involving animals (Ethics-AnimCare@nwu.ac.za) or
- the HREC administration for research involving humans (Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za)

Checklist for attachments for an amendment to a study to the HREC:

	Document	Tick if attached	Comment
1	Cover letter that indicates the title, researcher(s), the nature of the amendment, and what has been changed within the various attached documents (NB highlighted)		
2	Adjusted proposal with highlighted changes		
3	Adjusted documentation with highlighted changes (if applicable)		

Checklist for attachments for an amendment to a study to AnimCare:

	Document	Tick if attached	Comment
1	Cover letter that indicates the title, researcher(s), the nature of the amendment, and what has been changed where in the various attached documents (NB highlighted)		
2	The updated ethics application form		
3	Amended project proposal (as approved by the Scientific Committee) with changes highlighted		
If applicable:			
4	Scientific Committee's signed letter of approval of the project		
5	Scientific Committee's signed letter of approval of the project amendment		
6	Any new/amended monitoring sheets *(to observe any undue pain and suffering, and to manage (alleviate) pain and suffering when humane endpoints are reached)*		
7	Narrative CVs of all new members of the project team *(not included in the original application)*		
8	Proof of ethics training for all new members (minimum SANS training during the last 3 years)		
9	Vivarium authorisation for all new members (following animal handling course and SAVC authorisation)		
10	Proof of SAVC authorisation for all new members (included in Vivarium authorisation)		
11	Proof of training in animal handling for all new members (included in Vivarium authorisation)		
12	Animal holding facility's certificate of SAVC registration for any new facilities *(not included in the original application)*		
13	Project head's and professional supervisor declarations forms *(as applicable to the amendment)*		
14	Other new permission letters, informed consent, permits and contracts as received from relevant governing bodies, collaborators, sponsors or owners		

8.5 Monitoring report or request for extension of the study

A compulsory annual (in the case of minimal risk studies) and six monthly (in the case of medium and high risk studies) monitoring report of approved projects is required. This should be submitted at least *two months before the expiry date* of the study. The monitoring report requests a clear indication of the status of the study:

Status of study	**Yes**	**No**	**NA**
Has the study been completed and does this serve as your final report?			
Has this project been terminated? **If so, indicate the date, reason for termination and when HREC was notified:**			
Does the project have to continue in the following year?			

If the study has not been completed, an *extension* will automatically be granted for the project if the monitoring report is approved.

Note: Should you require an extension for the study at a time which does not fall within the required monitoring report period, you can use the same process to request for an extension by completing the monitoring report. A cover letter should clearly indicate that this is what you require.

Monitoring report process:

For minimal risk studies, an annual monitoring report must be submitted for the duration of the study until it has been completed. For medium or high-risk studies, a monitoring report must be submitted six monthly for the duration of the study.

Two months before the end of the ethics approval period indicated for the different risk level studies, the researcher needs to complete a monitoring report. To download the necessary documents from the Ethics Office's website go to http://health-sciences.nwu.ac.za/healthethics

Complete the monitoring report ensuring that all appropriate sections are completed.

It must be indicated in the monitoring report whether the study is *completed or not*. If the study is completed, the monitoring report acts as a *final report*. If the study is not complete, the monitoring report acts as a *request to extend the study*.

Submit your completed monitoring report to either:

- Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za for HREC monitoring reports or
- Ethics-AnimMonitoring@nwu.ac.za for AnimCare monitoring reports

The monitoring report is sent (within three working days) to two independent reviewers (5 days to review).

Feedback from the monitoring reports is consolidated and discussed at the appropriate Ethics Committee meeting, e.g. research involving animals at the AnimCare committee meeting and research involving humans at the HREC meeting.

- Decision
  - Clarification
  - Completion
  - Suspended
  - Continuation
  - Termination

A formal letter of decision is sent to applicants as soon as possible by the administration.

If any clarification or feedback is requested, the applicants should send the required information within a week to either:

- Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za for HREC monitoring reports or
- Ethics-AnimMonitoring@nwu.ac.za for AnimCare monitoring reports

Clarifications are sent back to the same independent reviewers.

Clarifications are either approved by reviewers or further clarification is requested.

If additional clarification is requested, it should be corrected (as indicated) and re-submitted within a week by the applicant to either:

- Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za for HREC monitoring reports or
- Ethics-AnimMonitoring@nwu.ac.za for AnimCare monitoring reports

A letter will be sent to the applicant stating the status of the research. If it is a continuation, it will state the date for the next monitoring report.

The decision is ratified at the next REC meeting

The researcher can continue with the research as soon as he/she has received the letter indicating continuation.

NB Notify the administration at either:

- Ethics-HRECMonitoring@nwu.ac.za *for HREC monitoring reports or*
- Ethics-AnimMonitoring@nwu.ac.za *for AnimCare monitoring reports*

as soon as possible if the study is terminated unexpectedly.

Note: Extension request not falling in the monitoring report cycle:

If a researcher wants to extend an approved research project at any time other than the compulsory monitoring times, i.e. annually for minimal risk studies and six monthly for a medium or high-risk study, the researcher can do so by submitting the same monitoring report with a very clear cover letter indicating that extension is requested that falls outside the monitoring cycle.

9 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- The National Health Act, No 61 of 2003.
- Regulations Relating to Research with Human Participants, 19 September 2014.
- Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (Department of Health, 2015).
- South African National Standard: The Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (SANS 10386:2008).
- Risk level descriptors for human participants, animals and environmental impact.
- The Rules for the Management of research ethics at the North-West University, 2016.

10 ADDENDA

No	Document name
1	Informed consent template and checklist
2	Confidentiality agreement
3	Indemnity form
	See all the documents referred to in the checklists and find it on the Ethics Office's website http://health-sciences.nwu.ac.za/healthethics